

Village of Whitehall, New York

Dissolution Study and Proposed Plan



Public Informational Meeting #1
October 28, 2025

LABERGE GROUP

MUNICIPAL SOLUTIONS TEAM



BEN H. SYDEN, AICP
VICE PRESIDENT



KATHLEEN ROONEY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SPECIALIST

LABERGE GROUP EXPERIENCE

Laberge Group is well versed in the development AND implementation of dissolutions plans.

- Town of Amsterdam / Former Village of Fort Johnson, Montgomery County, NY
- Town of Orangetown / Former Village of South Nyack, Rockland County, NY
- Town of Brookhaven / Former Village of Mastic Beach, Suffolk County, NY
- Town of Moriah / Former Village of Port Henry, Essex County, NY
- Town of Van Etten / Former Village of Van Etten, Chemung County, NY (implementation)
- Town of Macedon / Former Village of Macedon, Wayne County, NY

Laberge Group has worked with 7 OF THE 10 VILLAGES that have dissolved in the past 10 years.

and

Since 2020, Laberge Group has worked with:

- 5 Villages that voted not to dissolve
- 1 Village/Town that voted to not consolidate.
- 1 Village put decision on pause

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- **A new Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act** was enacted in 2010 and provides for a revised process:
 - **Board Initiated Process:** Village Board of Trustees may initiate the process; however, it must study the impacts of dissolution and develop and endorse a proposed plan before holding a referendum by the Village voters.
 - **Citizen Initiated Process** “The... Government Reorganization and Citizen Empowerment Act ... provides a process for citizens to petition for a public vote on dissolving or consolidating local governments The Dissolution or Consolidation process may also be initiated by a local governing board.”
- The Village of Whitehall Dissolution process is a **Board-Initiated Process.**
- **Citizen Empowerment Tax Credit (CETC):** NYS Provides an incentive to communities to encourage the dissolution/consolidation of local governments. Post dissolution, a credit equal to 15% of the combined Town and Village property tax levies in the year prior to dissolution or \$1,000,000 whichever is less. The CETC is provided to the Town on an annual basis.

Laberge Group Experience

Development AND implementation of reorganization studies/plans:

- Village of Tannersville/Town of Hunter, Greene County, Board Initiated Dissolution Plan
- Village of New Paltz/Town of New Paltz, Board Initiated Dissolution Plan
- Village and Town of Lake George, Interim Dissolution Study, Warren County
- Village of Wolcott/Town of Wolcott, Interim Dissolution Study, Wayne County
- Village of Highland Falls /Town of Highlands Dissolution Study, Orange County
- Village and Town of Pawling – Consolidation Study, Dutchess County
- Village of Spencer Dissolution Study, Tioga County
- Former Village of Fort Johnson / Town of Amsterdam, Montgomery County
- Former Village of South Nyack / Town of Orangetown, Rockland County
- Former Village of Mastic Beach/Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County
- Former Village of Port Henry/Town of Moriah, Essex County
- Former Village of Salem/Town of Salem, Washington County
- Former Village of Van Etten/Town of Van Etten, Chemung County
- Former Village of Macedon/Town of Macedon, Wayne County

Dissolution Plan
and/or
Implementation

VILLAGE DISSOLUTIONS IN NYS

- Prior to 2010, 39 New York Villages had been dissolved.
- Since 2010, 23 Villages have dissolved – most recent is the Village of Fort Johnson – 12/31/23.
- Since 2010, **31** Village have voted not to dissolve.

WHAT IS A DISSOLUTION PLAN?

- A Dissolution Plan must address all the legal requirements outlined in Article 17-A of the New York State General Municipal Law.
- Prior to the Referendum by the Village electorate, the Plan provides residents with information of how the Dissolution might affect them:
 - Impact on Governance and Representation
 - Future Conditions for Services
 - Estimated Impact on Property Taxes
 - Accounting and Disposition Plan for the Village's Assets and Liabilities
 - Potential Impact on Existing Village Local Laws and Codes
 - Potential Plan for the Transfer/Elimination of Employees
 - Proposed Date of Dissolution
 - Cost of Dissolution
- Post Dissolution the Plan is Non-binding on the Town.

WHAT IS CRITICAL TO KNOW ABOUT DISSOLUTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- **While Article 17-A calls for the Village to develop a Dissolution Plan, it is really not a Village issue but a Town issue.**
- **Collaboration with the Town:** Town leadership and staff participating in the process, providing information, assist in the development of the Plan all aimed at the development of a realistic plan that the Town participated in - though they're NOT obligated to do so.
- **Town Role in Decision to Dissolve:** Town voters do not have a vote in the referendum to dissolve the Village.
- **Plan Development:** If the Village electorate votes yes, the Town will be responsible for managing NEW OBLIGATIONS. With this in mind, the Village and Town should be coordinating to determining the “what,” “who,” and “how” services will be provided – SNOW PLOWING | ROADS | STREETLIGHTS | SEWER | WATER | PARKS | SIDEWALKS.
- **Post Dissolution Town Role in Service Provision:** Upon dissolution, the Town will be responsible for governance, services, local laws and taxing.
- **Realistic Plan Development:** Coordinated development by both Town and Village rather than a Village “wish list.” The Town is NOT BOUND by the plan, but is actively participating to smooth the transition.

BOARD INITIATED DISSOLUTION PROCESS

Board Initiated Dissolution Process

- The first step is a decision by the Board of Trustees to initiate a study and to develop a DRAFT Proposed Dissolution Plan for consideration by the Village electorate.
- The Board of Trustees must **endorse the Proposed Dissolution** and call for a **public hearing** on the Proposed Plan.
- **Hold Public Hearing(s)** no less than 35 days and no more than 90 days from the date of endorsement.
- Village Board Amends and **Approves Final Dissolution Plan** and **Sets Date for Referendum** **OR** **Votes to Stop the Process**.
- **Hold Referendum** on question: “Should the Village of Whitehall dissolve the Village? Yes _____ or No _____ within 60-90 days of Plan Approval.

BOARD INITIATED DISSOLUTION PLANNING PROCESS

We Are Here 

Collect and Analyze Data & Stakeholder Input

Study the Impacts of Dissolution

Develop Study Document and
DRAFT Proposed Dissolution Plan

Village Board Endorse
DRAFT Proposed Dissolution Plan

Hold Public Hearing
on Proposed Plan

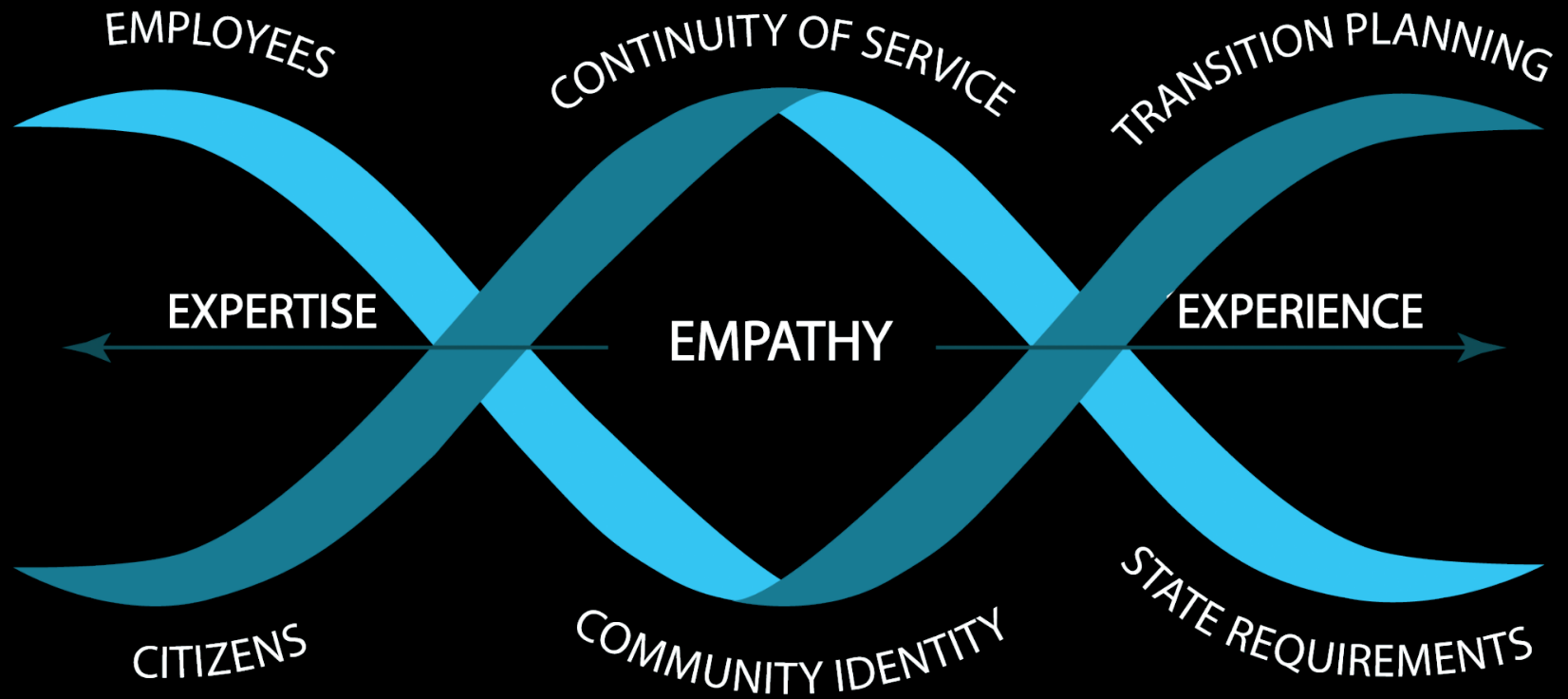
Revise the Proposed
Dissolution Plan as Needed

Village Board Vote to Stop the Process or Amend/Adopt
Final Dissolution Plan & Set Referendum Date

REFERENDUM

APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISSOLUTION PLAN

DISSOLUTION PLAN DNA



NAVIGATE THE “BUMPS, BRUISES & PITFALLS” OF DISSOLUTION

Leveraging Insights to Avoid or Successfully Navigate the “Bumps, Bruises, and Pitfalls” of Dissolution

COMMUNITY FOCUS

Going above and beyond steps mandated by law for a village dissolution to develop thoughtful responses that aid in healing deep community fissures respond to this delicate situation with the utmost professionalism and empathy for all involved.

COLLABORATION & CONSENSUS BUILDING

Developed a reputation for providing an effective approach to consensus and team building, working as intermediary between Village and Town and with stakeholders including employees and community members.

PROACTIVE TRANSITION PLANS

Foster a smooth transition and safeguard the provision of services during the interim between the dissolution referendum and the finalization of the dissolution:

- Path for Staff Transition
- Bridge to Dissolution (Interim IMAs)

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACH

CUSTOMIZED SOLUTION

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Each municipal client enters dissolution with a distinct set of challenges and opportunities.

VILLAGE OF WHITEHALL:

- Community-Specific Transition Strategies
- Employee and Retiree Issues
- Potential Need for Creation of Special Taxation Districts for Village-Specific Services
- Incorporation of Input from Public Engagement Efforts and Stakeholder Insights
- Hamlet Identity
- Incorporating Land Use, Zoning, & Planning Ordinances into Town-Wide Framework



LOCALLY DRIVEN PLANNING PROCESS

The Village is establishing a Steering Committee to provide project oversight and direction and to guide the development of the DRAFT Proposed Plan Framework. The process will include interviews with Town and Village leadership and departments and will include joint Village-Town subject matter meetings to assist the development of possible post dissolution services, service delivery, staffing and potential fiscal impact.

Steering Committee

**Village and Town
Leadership and
Department Interviews**

**Stakeholder Interviews and
Engagement**

**Joint Village and Town
Subject Matter Meetings**

**Public Engagement,
Input and Feedback**

HOW CAN THE VILLAGE INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS?

PROACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC IN-PERSON MEETINGS (2)

- Share facts and dispel misconceptions
- Citizen Input
- Answer any questions
- building consensus, finding common ground, and collaborating on solutions

FAQ

- Share facts & dispel misconceptions
- Answer any questions
- Building consensus, finding common ground, and collaborating on solutions

PROJECT WEBSITE

- All documents, and meeting notices, on the project website
- Website updated regularly
- E-mail notification of website updates

OPTIONAL ON-LINE Q & A

- Forms available online to dialog & address questions & concerns
- Access to objective information on the potential post dissolution conditions

<https://labergegroup.com/whitehall/>

TRANSPARENT

AVAILABLE

ACCESSIBLE

EMERGING TOPICS AND KEY TOUCHPOINTS

- **Representation and Voice in Government**
- **Village Identity**
- **Critical Services and Service Delivery**
 - Water and Sewer Services
 - Fire Service
 - What will happen to Village zoning?
 - What will happen to Village Planning Board and ZBA
- **What happens to Village local laws and codes?**
- **What will be the property tax Impact for both Village and Town outside Village taxpayers?**
- **What will happen to outstanding Village debt?**
- **How will Village employees be protected?**
- **What will happen to Village property, other assets and liabilities?**

WHAT HAPPENS TO VILLAGE LIABILITIES?

The Village is required to develop a disposition plan for all Village assets and liabilities. Any outstanding liabilities at the time of dissolution become a charge upon the property owners in the former Village of Whitehall.

Assets

- Village real property including improvements, vehicle, equipment, etc.
- Fund balances, reserves, trust and agency accounts, etc.

Liabilities

- Bonds, BANS, revenue anticipation notes, long term loans, leases or rental agreements & anticipated new debt
- Outstanding compensated balances, workers compensation costs, etc.
- Post-employment benefits such as retiree health
- Pending litigation and/or recent settlements or extra ordinary pending tax certiorari cases.
- Unknown and/or future liabilities.

It is common for Villages to use their cash assets and liquidated property and equipment assets to offset in part or whole, the outstanding liabilities of the Village.

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN PROJECTING THE FISCAL IMPACT?

I. Village and Town Transition and Implementation Costs

II. Long Term Structural Fiscal Impacts on Village and Town residents

- Post-dissolution services, delivery models, staffing and costs.
- Shift of Village tax levy to Town-wide & Special District tax bases and shift of Town outside Village property tax levy to town-wide tax base.
- Impact of the Citizens Empowerment Tax Credit (CETC).
- Possible cost savings, efficiencies, elimination of duplication of functions, etc.
- Revenue impacts such as elimination of gross receipt tax.
- Cost changes relative to wages, benefits, fees, contractual services, etc.
- Long term Village fiscal liabilities and use of liquidated Village assets.

Citizen Empowerment Tax Credit (CETC)

CETC is an incentive = to 15% of the Combined Village and Town Tax Levies in the year prior to Dissolution OR \$1,000,000 which every is less. In the case of Whitehall, the CETC is \$1M.

Village of Whitehall and Town of Whitehall		
Estimated Citizens Empowerment Tax Credit		
Maximum CETC for Tax Reduction	100%	\$409,515
Minimum CETC for Tax Reduction	70%	\$286,661
Maximum CETC -Discretionary	30%	\$122,855
1. CETC is ongoing annual payment subject to annual New York State appropriations as is most State Aid.		
2. The final CETC is based on the Village and Town taxes levied in the year prior to dissolution.		

WHAT HAPPENS TO VILLAGE CODES & LOCAL LAWS?

GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW (GML) ARTICLE 17-A §774 (K)

All Village local laws or ordinances remain in effect for up to 2 years post dissolution unless repealed or modified by the Town and shall be enforced by the Town within the former Village as if they had been duly adopted by the Town Board.

VILLAGE ZONING AND OTHER LAND USE CODES

- Evaluate possible inclusion approaches.
- If possible, identify preferred approach to integration.
- Outline critical issues that need to be addressed.
- Develop preliminary road map for transition and initial implementation.

OTHER VILLAGE CODES

- Conduct a preliminary side by side review of Village and Town Codes.
- Note possible preliminary actions: 1) Village code is no longer applicable; 2) Village code is unique to Village and should be adopted, 3) Town and Village have the same code and Village code could be repealed; 4) Town and Village codes are similar or potentially in conflict. A review and modifications may be necessary.
- Identify Town local laws that may impact the Village and develop possible options to address.

TEST FOR THE VOTER: DOES IT MAKE SENSE OR CENTS?



Governance: How will the proposed dissolution impact who and how decisions are made related to Village services, land use and codes?

Fiscal Impact: Will the proposed dissolution reduce the current Village's costs now or in the future?

Services and Community Norms: Will the proposed dissolution:

- Continue/discontinue various Village services?
- Improve the current delivery of Village services?
- Deliver services more efficiently
- Maintain/change Village zoning codes?
- Maintain or change to quality of life codes and their enforcement?

POST REFERENDUM

WHAT HAPPENS POST REFERENDUM?

If the vote is “No”

- Dissolution will not take effect; nothing further will occur.
- Dissolution process may not be initiated again for 4 years from the date of the Referendum.
- Village to address issues with recruitment of candidates for elected Village Offices.
- Village and Town may focus on shared services with other entities to reduce costs and improve quality.
- The Village and Town or their residents can still pursue a consolidation, but that is very rare.

WHAT HAPPENS POST REFERENDUM?

If the vote is “Yes”,

- Dissolution will occur on date set in the Dissolution Plan.
- Village will wind down Village Operations.
 - Transfer Properties & Sell and Liquidate Remaining Assets.
- Town will take steps to ramp up expanded operations.
 - Prepare Post Dissolution Budget.
 - Arrange for necessary staffing and equipment.
 - Create potential special districts such as Water District and Lighting Districts.
- Town and Village Continue Coordination to Assure for a Smooth Transition
 - If necessary, establish Inter-municipal Agreements (IMAs) for the provision of bridge services prior to dissolution.

FUNDING FOR RE-ORGANIZATION

Citizens Re-Organization Empowerment Grant (CREG)

REORGANIZATION PLANNING

Up to \$50,000



Funds expedited assistance to develop an interim dissolution study.

**SUBMIT
APPLICATION**

REORGANIZATION IMPLEMENTATION

Up to \$50,000



Funds to both Town and Village to facilitate transition and implementation.

**IF ELECT TO
RE-ORGANIZE**



Thank you!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO
PARTNERING WITH YOU
ON THIS IMPORTANT ENDEAVOR